2023 Syracuse University

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Philosophy Graduate Conference

March 24, 2023
Kittredge Auditorium HBC*
March 25, 2023
500 Hall of Languages+
Schedule of Events
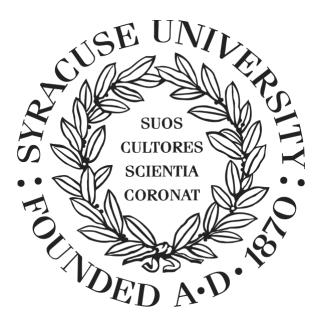*and*
Abstracts

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*Reception and two presentations will take place in Kittredge Auditorium, H.B. Crouse Hall; dinner and keynote will take place in 500 Hall of Languages.

+*All talks and meals will take place in 500 Hall of Languages, unless otherwise noted.*

Friday, March 24, 2023

12:00- 1:00: Reception/Light Lunch

1:00 - 2:30: Vincent Tanzil (University of Rochester)
Intuition is Evidence
Comments: Roger Rosena
Chair: Jared Liebergen

2:45 - 4:15: Itamar Weinshtock Saadon (Rutgers University)
Responsibility, Causation, and Reversing the order of Explanation
Comments: Huzeyfe Demirtas
Chair: Victor Sholl

4:45 - 6:00: Dinner

6:00-8:00: Internal Keynote Address:
Erica Shumener (Syracuse University)
Distinctness Near and Far
Chair: Antonio Freiles

Saturday, March 25, 2023

9:00 - 9:45: Light Breakfast

9:45 - 11:15: Xindi Ye (University of Hong Kong)
On Hypocrisy
Comments: Liam Lieblein
Chair: Kellan Head

Saturday, March 25, 2023, continued

11:30 - 1:00: Yusuke Satake (University of Rochester)
Non-Dispositional Modality
Comments: Thiago de Melo
Chair: Bertie Probyn

1:00 - 2:00: Lunch

2:15 - 3:45: Ayoob Shahmoradi (UC San Diego)
Thought: Dependent vs. Independent
Comments: Sanggu Lee
Chair: Stacy Kohls

4:00 - 6:00: External Keynote Address:
Sarah McGrath (Princeton)
Moral Experience: (What) is it? (What) do we want it to be?
Chair: Brett Blitch

7:00 - 9:30: Dinner with Invited Guests
Dosa Grill's Cuisine of India
4467 E Genesee Street, Dewitt NY

Abstracts

"Intuition is Evidence" – Vincent Tanzil (University of Rochester)

Intuition is a psychological state that accompanies some propositions, particularly in entertaining thought experiments. I argue that these intuitive states are sometimes evidence for intuited propositions. I do this by presenting a novel argument for the evidentiary role of intuition: Some philosophical arguments rely only on intuition as justification for at least one of their premises. Some conclusions from such arguments are justified. A philosophical conclusion is as well justified as the justification of its least justified premise, insofar as the conclusion's justification is derived from the premises. Therefore, all premises of such arguments are justified. Therefore, some premises of such arguments are justified only by intuition. One of the virtues of this argument is that it need not establish the nature of intuition before making the case that it is justifying.

"Responsibility, Causation, and Reversing the order of Explanation" – Itamar Weinshtock Saadon (Rutgers University)

In Several philosophers have argued that the way to account for our common-sense causal judgments in cases of causation by omission (and perhaps more broadly) is by introducing a normative component into the analysis of causation (Thomson 2003; McGrath 2005; Hitchcock and Knobe 2009). Such accounts face two main challenges. The first and general one is that causation seems like an entirely natural, non-normative relation (Beebee 2004). The second is that even if we grant that normativity can enter into the analysis of causation, these accounts get the metaphysics of moral responsibility wrong. More specifically, the worry is that these accounts 'reverse the order of explanation' between causation and moral responsibility (Sartorio 2007, 756; Thomson 2003, 102), and in particular, that they are committed to denying that moral responsibility is partly grounded in causal responsibility. This paper aims to defend normative accounts of causation from the second objection. By focusing on a widely discussed version of a normative account of causation by omission suggested by Sarah McGrath (2005), I argue that such objections rest on a failure to distinguish between two different sorts of moral responsibility— moral responsibility for the outcome of one's omission, and moral responsibility for one's omission—and the different explanatory roles they may play in grounding causation. Specifically, I argue that only the latter should play a role in grounding causation, and so the objection fails. I conclude that at least when it comes to the metaphysics of moral responsibility, all is still well for normative accounts of causation.

"On Hypocrisy" – Xindi Ye (University of Hong Kong)

One kind of argument in conceptual engineering (CE) uses a concept C to argue against use of that very concept C (think: 'we ought not use OUGHT'). Call this a hypocritical argument. Should we accept hypocritical arguments? Proponents suggest that we absolve hypocrisy by reframing hypocrisy as a kind of "ladder-kicking" argument, or by assimilating it under the paradigm of reductio ad absurdum. Opponents argue that hypocritical arguments are somehow inconsistent, but it's not clear where inconsistency is located: perhaps between assertion and action (the arguer does what she says she ought not do), or between commitments (the arguer rejects C, but her reasoning endorses C by way of using C). The further question is whether these inconsistencies bear on the acceptability of the argument. I argue, in this paper, that some hypocritical arguments are defective and therefore unacceptable. These arguments are not merely about doing something you said you ought not do; they are about doing something you said you ought not do, and the fact of your doing it contributes to undermining the argument. There are at least two ways that this could be so: (1) hypocrisy is indication that the conclusion is impracticable, hence the argument is defective because it fails to account for constraints around implementation; (2) hypocrisy is evidence that some premises are false, hence the argument is defective because unsound. Assimilating hypocrisy under reductio and ladder kicking won't work: they fail to absolve defective instances of hypocrisy. Despite these problems, I argue that hypocrisy is unlikely to pose deep methodological challenges to conceptual engineers, because we have no reason to think that they are common in CE, and because we do have the means to identify hypocritical arguments, even non obvious ones.

"Non-Dispositional Modality" – Yusuke Satake (University of Rochester)

The debate on the metaphysics of modality has been driven partially but dominantly by the question of what the ontological status of possible worlds is. However, there are other initially plausible, sophisticated theories that attempt to account for modal notions without appealing to the concept of possible worlds. In this paper, I aim to clarify a potential problem of one such view, modal dispositionalism. For this, in section 1, I will overview the debate about the metaphysics of modality and situate where modal dispositionalism is in the debate. In section 2, I will articulate a typical account of modality by modal dispositionalism as well as the main motivations for the view. In section 3, I will argue that the dispositionalist account of modality inevitably leads to an infinite regress of explanation whenever it attempts to explain a non-actual possibility. If modal dispositionalists want to avoid the infinite regress, then they must accept that some possible truths are primitive and non-dispositional, resulting in the acceptance of a counterexample to the view.

"Thought: Dependent vs. Independent" – Ayoob Shahmoradi (UC San Diego)

The greatest chasm in the philosophy of language] divides two perspectives on the nature of reference. On the one hand we have (broadly) Fregean views on which refence requires the ability to uniquely individuate the referent. On the other hand, we have Kripke and his followers who deny that reference requires such an ability. I present a distinction between two types of mental reference and then I argue that part of the disagreement between these two groups of views is due to the fact that each side takes reference to be exhausted by one of these two types at the cost of ignoring the other. I will argue that these two kinds of reference have different properties. As a case study, I develop my arguments by focusing on Gareth Evans's theory of reference. I show that Evans' arguments for his much discussed Russell Principle – that reference requires uniquely individuating the referent – work only for one kind of reference ('independent reference'). At the same time, the typical Kripke and Donnellan style scenarios that are often brought up against Russell's Principle work only for the other type of reference ('dependent reference'). Therefore, each theory captures only part of the full story about mental reference. A full story of reference requires both.

In Gratitude